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Presbyterian Statement on Communism and Related Issues

The General Council of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. adopted on October 21 and made public on November 2 a statement, drafted by Dr. John A. Mackay, moderator of General Assembly and chairman of the General Council, on the methods used in the fight against communism, and other important aspects of the present situation. Dr. Mackay declared that "serious thought needs to be given to the menace of communism in the world of today and to the undoubted aim on the part of its leaders to subvert the thought and life of the United States. Everlasting vigilance is also needed, and appropriate precautions should be constantly taken to forestall the insidious intervention of a foreign power in the international affairs of our country."

But, said Dr. Mackay, Christian citizens "have reason to take a grave view of the situation which is being created by the almost exclusive concentration of the American mind upon the problem of the threat of communism. . . . Some Congressional inquiries have revealed a distinct tendency to become inquisitions. These inquisitions . . . begin to constitute a threat to freedom of thought in this country.

"Treason and dissent are being confused. . . . Un-American attitudes toward ideas and books are becoming current. Attacks are being made upon citizens of integrity and social passion which are utterly alien to our democratic tradition. They are particularly alien to the Protestant religious tradition. . . ."

Even more serious is the "purely negative" approach to the whole situation "as an exclusively police problem." This may lead "the American mind into a spiritual vacuum" which could "with ease" result in "a fascist tyranny."

Therefore, Dr. Mackay urges all Presbyterians to give "earnest consideration" to three "basic principles and their implications for our thought and life."

"I. *The Christian Church has a prophetic function to fulfill in every society and in every age.*"

The Church should "draw attention to violations of those spiritual bases of human relationship which have been established by God." It should also "proclaim those principles, and . . . instill that spirit, which are essential for social health, and which form the indispensable foundation of sound and stable policies in the affairs of state."

"II. *The majesty of truth must be preserved at all times and at all costs.*

"Loyalty to truth is the common basis of true religion and true culture. . . . In the interests of propaganda, truth is deliberately distorted or remains unspoken. The demagogue, who lives by propaganda, is coming into his own on a national scale. . . .

"Communism, as we know to our sorrow, is committed on principle to a philosophy of lying; democracy, in fighting communism, is in danger of succumbing, through fear and in the name of expediency, to the self-same philosophy. It is being assumed, in effect, that, in view of the magnitude of the issues at stake, the end justifies the means. Whatever the outcome of such a war, the moral consequences will be terrifying. . . .

"III. *God's sovereign rule is the controlling factor in history.*"

"Social disorder and false political philosophies cannot be adequately met by police measures, but only by a sincere attempt to organize society in accordance with the everlasting principles of God's moral government of the world. . . .

"That we have the obligation to make our nation as secure as possible, no one can dispute. . . . A still greater obligation . . . is to make sure that what we mean by security, and the methods we employ to achieve it, are in accordance with the will of God. . . .

"Let us frankly recognize that many of the revolutionary forces of our time are in great part the judgment of God upon human selfishness and complacency, and upon man's forgetfulness of man. . . .

"On the other hand, just because God rules in the affairs of men, communism as a solution of the human problem is foredoomed to failure. No political order can prevail which deliberately leaves God out of account. Despite its pretention to be striving after 'liberation,' communism enslaves in the name of freedom. It does not know that evil cannot be eradicated from human life by simply changing a social structure. Man, moreover, has deep spiritual longings which communism cannot satisfy. The communistic order will eventually be shattered upon the bedrock of human nature, that is, upon the basic sins, and the abysmal needs, of man and society. . . .

"Nevertheless, Communists, Communist nations and Communist-ruled peoples, should be our concern. In hating a system let us not allow ourselves to hate individuals or whole nations. . . .

Page 1 Presbyterian Statement on Communism and Related Issues.
Page 2 Estimated Population of the World.
Index, Vol. 32, January to December, 1953.

"Let us ever be on the lookout for the evidence of change in the Communist world, for the effects of disillusionment, and for the presence of a God-implanted hunger. Such disillusionment and hunger can be met only by a sympathetic approach and a disposition to listen and confer.

"There is clear evidence that a post-Communist mood is actually being created in many parts of Europe and Asia. Let us seek to deepen that mood. Let us explore afresh the meaning of mercy and forgiveness and recognize that both can have social and political significance when they are sincerely and opportunely applied. . . .

"In human conflicts there can be no substitute for negotiation. . . . Talk, . . . which does not rule out in advance the possibility of success, talk which takes place in private, and not before reporters or microphones or television, is the only kind of approach which can lead to sanity and fruitful understanding. Let the process of conference be private, but let its conclusions, its complete conclusions, be made public.

"In this connection such an organization as the United Nations is in harmony with the principles of God's moral government. . . . While the United Nations organization is very far from perfection and it functions today under great handicaps, it is yet the natural and best available agent for international cooperation and the settlement of disputes among nations. It is imperative, therefore, that it be given the utmost support. It stands between us and war.

"While we take all wise precautions for defense, both within and outside our borders, the present situation demands spiritual calm, historical perspective, religious faith, and an adventurous spirit. Loyalty to great principles of truth and justice has made our nation great; such loyalty alone can keep it great and ensure its destiny."

The full text may be obtained from the office of the General Assembly, Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia 7, Pa. The title is: *A Letter to Presbyterians Concerning the Present Situation in Our Country and in the World.*

Estimated Population of the World

At "midyear, 1952," the population of the world was about 2,456,000,000 persons, according to *Statistical Papers,* Series A., Vol. V, No. 4, 1953, United Nations, New York. The data for Africa and Asia are "subject to considerable error," and there is included only an "allowance" for the Soviet Union, for which no figures were available. The world total is thus only an "approximate estimate," it is stated in the paper.

Index, Vol. 32 January to December, 1953

Date of Issue

Academic Freedom
Five safeguards of academic freedom...O. 17

Advertising
Modern advertising appraised.....O. 10
Textbook advertising.....O. 17

Africa
Africa in the world today.....My. 30
Africa, the U.N., and the U.S.....My. 30
South Africa: is racial separation possible? .....Je. 20
South Africa's international relations..Je. 20

Aging
Church membership and adjustment in old age.....S. 19
Older people's recreation.....N. 21

Agriculture and Rural Life
Agricultural dilemmas.....N. 21
"Alternative to monopolism and communism" .....O. 3
Book world.....S. 12
Christian concerns regarding food and agriculture.....Ja. 3
Christian farmer and his government...Ja. 10
Experiments in rural church methods...S. 19
"Father Tompkins of Nova Scotia".....O. 3
Farm prices and farm incomes.....Mr. 14
Farmers as cooperators.....O. 3
"Food and population".....Mr. 14
Migratory farm labor.....Mr. 14
New generation on the land.....O. 3
"Participation in the rural church"....Mr. 14
Power structures in agriculture.....O. 3
Roman Catholics on world's rural problems .....O. 3
"Rural church administration".....O. 3
Rural churchmen discuss farm problems .....D. 19
Rural resettlement in Puerto Rico.....N. 14
Rural teachers.....O. 17
Rural-urban fringe.....Mr. 14
Self-reliance or government aid for farmers.....O. 3
"Thousand acres of destiny".....N. 21
Vermont village meets a challenge .....O. 3
Way migrants live and work.....O. 3
Wetbacks and American farm labor...N. 21
World farmers' organization.....Mr. 14

Anti-Semitism
Anti-Semitism—new and old.....F. 21
National Council on anti-Semitism....Mr. 21
Rosenberg case.....F. 21

Arabs
Arab refugees: a grave continuing problem .....N. 28
Missionary speaks.....N. 28

Art and Religion.....Je. 13, D. 5

Atomic Energy
Atomic energy in industry.....Ja. 31

Book Review Articles
Anxiety, fear and guilt—some books on psychiatry and religion.....Je. 6
Business as a Christian vocation.....My. 16
Cross-currents in American religious and ethical thought.....Ja. 3
Education—criticism, defense, self-appraisal .....Mr. 28
Religion and mental health.....Je. 6
Religion in the schools?.....Mr. 28
Science, morals, religion, and culture .....S. 5
Six volume series.....Ja. 24

Books Reviewed
American culture and religion, Sweet .....S. 5
American education and religion: the problem of religion in the schools, Johnson, ed.....Mr. 28
American foreign assistance, Brown and Opie.....S. 26
Apostles of discord, Roy.....S. 26
Big change, Allen.....My. 16
Character building and higher education, Tead.....Mr. 28
Characteristically American, Barton .....Ja. 3
Christian faith and social action, Hutchison, ed.....S. 5
Church work in the city, Shippey.....S. 26
Community planning for human resources, Buell and associates.....S. 26
Community welfare organization, Stroup .....S. 26
Consumer's guide to better buying, Margolius .....O. 17
Cooperative road to abundance, Bowen..O. 3
Courage to be, Tillich.....S. 5
Cult and culture, Vogt.....S. 5
Decline of agrarian democracy, McConnell .....O. 3
Education and American civilization, Counts .....Mr. 28
Education and liberty, Conant.....Mr. 28
Education for a world society: promising practices today, Arndt and Everett, eds.....Mr. 28
Education for all American youth, Educational Policies Commission...Mr. 28
Education freedom in an age of anxiety, Hullfish, ed.....Mr. 28
Employment and wages in the United States, Twentieth Century Fund.....S. 26
Fact and faith, Haake.....D. 12
Faith and education, Buttrick.....Mr. 28
Faith of America, Kaplan, Williams, Kohn .....Mr. 28
Faith that fulfills, Bixler.....Ja. 3
Farm policies of the United States, 1790-1950, Benedict.....O. 3
Farmers of the future, prospects and policies for establishing a new generation on the land, Wayland, Brunner and Cyr, eds. .....O. 3
Father Tompkins of Nova Scotia, Boyle .....O. 3
Foes of the spirit, Holmes.....Ja. 3
Forgotten language, Fromm.....Je. 6
Function of the public schools in dealing with religion, Com. on Religion and Education, American Council on Education .....Mr. 28

Date of Issue

General education in school and college ....Mr. 28
Goals of economic life, Ward, ed.....Ja. 24
Government owned patents available for license....D. 12
Great enterprise, Overstreet....Ja. 3
Guiding workers in Christian education, McKibben....O. 24
Guilt, Houselander....Je. 6
If this be religion, Stamm....Ja. 3
Individual and his religion, Allport....S. 5
Industries for small communities, Morgan ....O. 31
Jung's psychology and its social meaning, Prozoff....Je. 6
Man's search for himself, May....Je. 6
Mental health and Hindu psychology Akhilananda ....Je. 6
Modern science and modern man, Conant ....Ja. 3
Moral and spiritual values in education, Bower....Mr. 28
Moral principles of action, Anshen, ed. ....S. 5
Morality in American politics, Graham ....S. 26
Neurosis and human growth, Horney..Je. 6
Of faith and learning, Bach....Mr. 28
Organizational revolution, Boulding...Mr. 7
Our bishops speak, foreword by Huber ....S. 5
Out of my life, Schweitzer....S. 12
Patterns of educational philosophy—a democratic interpretation, Brameld....Mr. 28
Patterns of social concern in four American Protestant denominations, Brewster ....Ja. 17
Peoples and policies of South Africa, Marquard....Je. 20
Person or the significance of man, Flewelling ....S. 5
Philosophy of education, Kilpatrick..Mr. 28
Possibilities unlimited, Morris....Ja. 3
Preinduction health and human relations, Dickerson and Sweeney, eds. ...O. 31
Problem of Christ in the twentieth century, Matthews....S. 5
Psychotherapy and a Christian view of man, Roberts....Je. 6
Religion and culture, Neill....S. 5
Religion and economic responsibility, Muelder ....My. 16
Religion, healing and health, Van Buskirk ....Je. 6
Religion in the development of American culture, Sweet....S. 5
Religion in twentieth century America, Schneider....Mr. 21, S. 5
Religious beliefs of American scientists, Long....Ja. 3
Religious freedom in Europe, Cockburn ....My. 23
Religious perspectives in college teaching, Hazen Foundation....Mr. 28
Report from Christian Europe, Herman ....Ap. 11
Report on the American communist, Ernst and Loth....Je. 13
Rural church administration, Smith...O. 3
School in American culture, Mead....Mr. 28
Seeking, Thomas....O. 3
Social responsibilities of the businessman, Bowen....My. 16
Spiritual problems in contemporary literature, Hopper, ed....S. 5
Standards we raise, Mazur....D. 12
Systematic theology, Tillich....S. 5
Teacher of teachers: frontiers of theory and practice in teacher education, Rugg....Mr. 28

Date of Issue

Theology of Paul Tillich, Kegley and Bretall, eds....S. 5
Theory of economic policy in English classical political economy, Robbins ....Mr. 7
Thirteen Americans: their spiritual autobiographies, Finkelstein, ed.....D. 12
This I believe, Murrow, ed....F. 14
This is life eternal, Wynne-Tyson....S. 5
Time and eternity, Stace....S. 5
Today's children and yesterday's heritage, Fahs....Ja. 3
Trend of government activity in the United States since 1900, Fabricant, assisted by Lipsey....S. 26
Two roads to truth, Sinnott....S. 5
Understanding fear in ourselves and others, Overstreet....Je. 6
Uneducated, Ginzberg and Bray....O. 17
Vermont tradition, Fisher....D. 5
What Americans believe and how they worship, Williams....S. 5
Why the private school?, Helley....Mr. 28
William Heard Kilpatrick—trail blazer in education, Tenenbaum....Mr. 28
Within our power, Fosdick....Ja. 3
Wonderful world of books....S. 12
World Christian handbook, Bingle and Grubb, eds....Mr. 21

Chamber of Commerce
Positions of Chamber of Commerce....S. 26

Christian Vocation
Business as a Christian vocation ....My. 16

Christianity
Christian hope....Ja. 3

Church and State
Church and state in Roman Catholic theory ....O. 31
Guide to study of Church and state....O. 31
"Obedience to the state"....S. 12

Churches
Appraisal of federated churches....S. 19
Can Protestants coordinate program emphases? ....S. 12
Church and the welfare state....F. 14
Church behind the iron curtain....Ap. 11
Church in the East as seen by a Scot..My. 23
Church statements on conscientious objectors ....N. 21
Churches and world order....D. 19
English Free Churches on conscription ....D. 12
Expense account for clergymen?....S. 12
Highlights from the 1953 Yearbook of American Churches....S. 19
London "guild church"....O. 10
Presbyterian statement on Communism and related issues ....D. 26
"Right to speak"....O. 24
Rural churchmen discuss farm policy..D. 19
Social concern in four denominations..Ja. 17
Symposium on Protestant social policy ....S. 12
Training lay preachers in England ....D. 12

Committee for Economic Development
Tariffs, taxes, money, and foreign trade ....Je. 13

Communism
American ex-communist—two studies..Je. 13
"Big bad bishop and the strawberry blonde" ....O. 24
Church behind the Iron Curtain....Ap. 11
Church in the East as seen by a Scot..My. 23
Handbook on communism....Ap. 11
Investigations of foundations....My. 2
"Limits of inquiry"....O. 21
Presbyterian statement on Communism and related issues ....D. 26

Date of Issue

Communities
Community for mobile junior executives ....S. 19
"Industries for small communities"....O. 31

Conferences
Churches and world order....D. 19
Rural churches discuss farm policy....D. 19

Conscription
English Free Churches on conscription.D. 12

Conscientious Objectors
Church statements on conscientious objectors ....N. 21
Conscientious objectors....O. 10

Consumer
Buyer's guide....O. 17

Cooperatives
"Alternative to monopolism and communism" ....O. 3
Farmers as cooperators....O. 3

Councils of Churches
Finances of state and local councils ....S. 19

Cybernetics....My. 23

Douglass, Harlan Paul ....Ap. 18

Economics
Charts on economics free to clergymen ....Ap. 18
Theologian on economic responsibilities ....My. 16

Education
American Education Week ....O. 17
Are public schools godless? ....O. 17
Education—criticism, defense, self-appraisal ....Mr. 28
Five safeguards of academic freedom ..O. 17
Four faculty types—all Episcopalian ...O. 17
Review of public education ....O. 17
Rural teachers ....O. 17
Stork causes crises ....O. 17
Teaching about religion ....O. 24
Textbook advertising ....O. 17
Those without education ....O. 17

Education, Adult
Adult education for laymen ....D. 12

Education, Religious
Are public schools godless? ....O. 17
Four faculty types—all Episcopalian ...O. 17
How to train and supervise ....O. 24
"Our children and religion"....O. 24
Religion in the schools? ....Mr. 28

Espionage
Rosenberg case ....F. 21

Ethics
Cross-currents in American religious and ethical thought [Books]....Ja. 3

Family
Family allowance ....O. 31

Food
Christian concerns regarding food and agriculture ....Ja. 3
"Food and population" ....Mr. 14

Foreign Trade
"Free trade is inevitable" ....Je. 13
Tariffs, taxes, money, and foreign trade ....Je. 13

Gambling
Fantastic trend in harness racing ....D. 12
Gambling and British welfare ....My. 9

Date of Issue

Health
"Commercial prostitution—then and now" ....O. 10
Health and human relations ....O. 31
Voluntary enterprise in Virginia ....S. 12

Immigration
"Give me your tired, your poor—"....Ap. 4
Refugee emergency ....Ap. 4

India
"Family planning in India" ....O. 10
India after six years ....O. 10

Indians
Fishing rights of the Yakima Indians...N. 14

Industry and Industrial Relations
Industrial chaplains in Britain ....My. 23
"Right to speak" ....O. 24
Worker priests in France ....My. 23

International Relations
Appraisals of Point Four ....S. 12
Churches and world order ....D. 19

Johnson, F. Ernest
Both depth and breadth ....Ja. 10

Labor
Labor at the turn of the year—I ....Ja. 10
Labor at the turn of the year—II ....Ja. 17
Labor in 1953 ....Je. 27
Taft-Hartley law ....Je. 27
Union membership—right or duty? ...Ja. 3

Legislation
Bricker Amendment ....Ap. 18
Confidentiality of assistance records ...Mr. 21
First report on activities of the 83d Congress ....F. 28
Investigation of foundations ....My. 2
Report on health ....My. 2
Second report on activities of the 83d Congress ....My. 2
"Trade, not aid" ....F. 28

Leisure
Americans with time on their hands ...D. 12

Liberty
Four statements on human freedoms..Mr. 21

Liquor
Expenditure for alcoholic beverages ....S. 12

Loyalty
Bishop, the committee and the files ...Ap. 25
California state oath proposal ....My. 23
Loyalty oath in housing projects ....My. 23

McCarran Act
"Give me your tired, your poor—"....Ap. 4
Refugee emergency ....Ap. 4

Migrants
Way migrants live and work ....O. 3
Wetbacks and American farm labor ...N. 21

Missions, Foreign
Income taxes of missionaries ....F. 14
Increase in number of foreign missionaries ....S. 19
Reallocation of China missionaries and funds ....F. 14

Money
Tariffs, taxes, money, and foreign trade ....Je. 13

National Association of Manufacturers
Atomic energy in industry ....Ja. 31
Industrial management looks ahead ....Ja. 31

Date of Issue

National Council of Churches
Can Protestants coordinate program emphases? ....S. 12
Confidentiality of assistance records ..Mr. 21
National Council on anti-Semitism ....Mr. 21
Social security for ministers ....S. 12
Statement on human freedom ....Mr. 21

Near East
Arab refugees: a grave continuing problem ....N. 28
Missionary speaks ....N. 28

Note
New editor ....Ja. 3

Pamphlets
Selected pamphlets, 1952-1953 ....N. 7

Philanthrophy
Downward trend in philanthropy? ....S. 19

Politics and Government
Administration and Congressional committees ....Mr. 21
"Big bad bishop and the strawberry blonde" ....O. 24
"Limits of inquiry" ....O. 24
More about Congressional investigations ....My. 9
New government department ....My. 9
Religious affiliations of representatives..Ja. 17

Population
Estimated population of the world....D. 26
Projections of the population ....O. 24
Remarkable U. S. birth rate ....S. 19

Psychiatry
Anxiety, fear, and guilt—some books on psychiatry and religion ....Je. 6

Puerto Rico
Puerto Ricans in New York ....N. 14
Rural resettlement in Puerto Rico ....N. 14

Race Relations
Segregation in railway coaches ....My. 23

Racing
Fantastic trend in harness racing ....D. 12

Refugees
Arab refugees: a grave continuing problem ....N. 28
Missionary speaks ....N. 28
Refugee emergency ....Ap. 4

Religion
Anxiety, fear, and guilt—some books on psychiatry and religion ....Je. 6
Art and religion ....Je. 2, D. 5
"Businessmen on their knees" ....O. 24
Cross-currents in American religious and ethical thought ....Ja. 3
Harvard's president on religion ....O. 17
"Our children and religion"....O. 24
Religious affiliations of representatives..Ja. 17
Religion and mental health ....Je. 6
Religion in USA since 1900 ....Mr. 21
Teaching about religion ....O. 24
Unrecognized influence of evangelical religion ....F. 14

Religious Liberty
Supreme Court on religious liberty ...My. 23

Research
"When is a fact not a fact?" ....D. 12

Roman Catholic Church
Catholics and international affairs ....O. 31
Church and state in Roman Catholic theory ....O. 31
Items from the Roman Catholic press..My. 9

Date of Issue

Social Security
Administration plan for social security for clergymen ....O. 10
Social security for ministers ....S. 12

Social Work and Social Welfare
"Are we doing enough?"....My. 9
Christian Social Welfare, Vol. 1, No. 1..D. 12
"Commercialized prostitution—then and now" ....O. 10
Confidentiality of assistance records ..Mr. 21
New government department ....My. 9
"Pastor's guide to social welfare"....D. 12
Role of social science in the ministry....S. 12
Social work in India ....My. 9
Symposium on Protestant social policy..S. 12

South Africa
South Africa: is racial separation possible? ....Je. 20
South Africa's international relations ..Je. 20

Spain
Church and state in Roman Catholic theory ....O. 31
Protestant chapels in Spain ....Mr. 21

Statistics
Church-attendance poll ....F. 14
Downward trend in philanthropy? ....S. 19
Finances of state and local councils ....S. 19
Giving to churches ....Ja. 3
Highlights from the 1953 Yearbook of American churches ....S. 19
Increase in number of foreign missionaries ....S. 19
Religion of Canadians ....F. 14
"Remarkable U. S. birth rate"....S. 19
Sermon for statisticians ....D. 12
Some statistics on philanthropy ....My. 9

Supreme Court
Supreme Court on religious liberty ...My. 23

Tariffs
Tariffs, taxes, money, and foreign trade ....Je. 13

Taxation
Tariffs, taxes, money, and foreign trade ....Je. 13

Television
Kaufman affair on television ....F. 14
TV, the tester ....O. 24

Tobacco
Growth and more growth ....O. 31

United Nations
Africa, the U.N. and the U.S. ....My. 30
Another look at the U.N. ....Ap. 25
Catholics and international affairs ....O. 31
Record and prospects of the United Nations ....D. 12
U.N. information ....S. 12

U.S. Foreign Policy
"Christian ethics and U.S. foreign policy" ....D. 12

Voice of America
Other American stations abroad ....F. 7
Voice of America ....F. 7

Welfare State
Church and the welfare state ....F. 14

World Council of Churches
Christian concerns regarding food and agriculture ....Ja. 3
Christian hope ....Ja. 3

333 Printed in U.S.A.

Date of Issue

.O. 10
.S. 12

My. 9
.D. 12

.O. 10
Mr. 21
My. 9
.D. 12
.S. 12
My. 9
.S. 12

Je. 20
Je. 20

.O. 31
Mr. 21

.F. 14
.S. 19
.S. 19
Ja. 3

.S. 19

.S. 19
.F. 14
.S. 19
.D. 12
My. 9

My. 23

Je. 13

Je. 13

.F. 14
.O. 24

.O. 31

My. 30
Ap. 25
.O. 31

D. 12
.S. 12

D. 12

F. 7
F. 7

F. 14

Ja. 3
Ja. 3